



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/520,203	01/04/2005	Michael Van Der Aa	NL 020612	7842
24737 7590 01/22/2007 PHILIPS INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY & STANDARDS P.O. BOX 3001 BRIARCLIFF MANOR, NY 10510			EXAMINER KLIMOWICZ, WILLIAM JOSEPH	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			2627	

SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD OF RESPONSE	MAIL DATE	DELIVERY MODE
31 DAYS	01/22/2007	PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire 6 MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/520,203

Applicant(s)

VAN DER AA ET AL.

Examiner

William J. Klimowicz

Art Unit

2627

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 1 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☐ Responsive to communication(s) filed on ____.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-10 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) ____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☒ Claim(s) 1-10 are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on ____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. ____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date ____.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. ____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- 6) ☐ Other: ____.

Election of Species Requirement

This application contains claims directed to the following patentably distinct species:

Specie I: Figures 1, 3a, 3b, 3c and 4, drawn to a loading mechanism used with an optical disc having a detachable protective plate.

Specie II: Figures 2, 5a and 5b, drawn to a loading mechanism used with an optical disc having a sleeve-type protective plate.

The species are *a priori* independent or distinct because each of the Species, grouped *supra*, is disclosed as separate and distinct Species, set forth by the Applicant's disclosure. That is, each of the Specie groupings articulated by the associated Figure(s), *supra*, has been described by the Applicant's specification as being mutually exclusive and distinct from the other Groupings.

Serious Burden

Additionally, each of the various disclosed species details a mutually exclusive characteristic of an optical disc loading mechanism as evidenced by the representation of each various species with a different figure or set of figures. A search for one of these mutually exclusive characteristics is not coextensive with a search for the other mutually exclusive characteristics and therefore searching for all mutually exclusive characteristics could not be done without *serious burden*.

Art Unit: 2627

Moreover still, the search for one distinctly claimed and mutually exclusive specie, is not required for the other(s).

The Examiner *additionally* maintains that each identified Species and/or invention Grouping, as articulated in the Election of Species Requirement, *supra*, would impose other grave, *serious burdens* upon the Examiner. Moreover, in accordance with **37 CFR 1.104**, to the nature of each distinctly grouped Species and/or Grouping, the Examiner must make a thorough study thereof and a thorough investigation of the available prior art relating to the claimed subject matter of each distinctly identified Species and/or Grouping. The examination for each distinct Specie/Grouping must be complete with respect both to compliance of the application with the applicable statutes and rules and to the patentability of the invention as claimed, in addition to matters of form, including **Title 35 to the United States Code**, sections **101, 102, 103** and **112**, to each distinctly grouped invention.

Moreover, each separately grouped specie/invention must be thoroughly searched, including, but not limited to, various searching fields, inclusive of differing text search strategies and/or queries, determination of anticipation, if any, of uncovered prior art, potential application of the Graham factual inquiries to each distinct specie/invention to review for any indicia of possible obviousness, etc.

Moreover still, as has been held, if there is an express admission that the claimed inventions would have been obvious over each other within the meaning of **35 U.S.C. § 103**, restriction should not be required. *In re Lee*, 199 USPQ 108 (Comm'r Pat. 1978).

There is nothing on record, at present, to show that the distinctly grouped species/inventions are obvious variants.

Moreover, the Applicant has not established that each of the aforementioned Species are not separately patentable, nor has Applicant submitted evidence or identified such evidence now of record showing the species to be obvious variants or clearly admit on the record that this is the case. If the Applicant were to include such a statement, ***the election requirement would be withdrawn***. In either instance, however, if the Examiner finds one of the inventions unpatentable over the prior art, the evidence or admission may be used in a rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103 of the other invention.

Applicant is required under 35 U.S.C. 121 to elect a single disclosed species for prosecution on the merits to which the claims shall be restricted if no generic claim is finally held to be allowable.

Additionally, the Applicant being the inventor of the claimed subject matter, should identify which claims are considered generic to the Applicant's claimed subject matter.

Applicant is advised that the reply to this requirement to be complete must include (i) an election of a species or invention to be examined even though the requirement be traversed (37 CFR 1.143) and (ii) identification of the claims encompassing the elected invention.

The election of an invention or species may be made with or without traverse. To reserve a right to petition, the election must be made with traverse. If the reply does not ***distinctly*** and ***specifically*** point out supposed errors in the restriction requirement, the election shall be treated as an election without traverse.

Art Unit: 2627

If the Applicant traverses the election/restriction requirement, the Examiner will judiciously assay the traversal to determine whether the Applicant has admitted, either implicitly or explicitly, that the restricted inventions and/or species bear no patentable distinctness between each Grouping, Specie and/or sub-grouping(s) and subspecie(s), as set forth, *supra*.

Should Applicant traverse on the ground that the inventions or Species are not patentably distinct, Applicant should submit evidence or identify such evidence now of record showing the inventions or Species to be obvious variants or clearly admit on the record that this is the case. In either instance, if the Examiner finds one of the inventions unpatentable over the prior art, the evidence or admission may be used in a rejection under **35 U.S.C.103(a)** of the other invention.

Because these inventions are **independent or distinct** for the reasons given above and the search for the multiple, mutually exclusive species would impose a grave, *serious burden* and hardship upon the Examiner, for *at least* the reasons articulated, *supra*, restriction for *a priori* examination purposes as indicated is **PROPER**.

More specifically, as set forth in **MPEP § 803**:

Under the statute an application may properly be required to be restricted to one of two or more claimed inventions only if they are able to support separate patents and they are either independent (**MPEP § 806.04 - § 806.04(i)**) *or* distinct (**MPEP § 806.05 - § 806.05(i)**). [Emphasis in bold italics added].

Moreover as set forth in **MPEP § 802.01**, the meaning of independent “and” distinct within the context of Patent Office restriction policy and practice is articulated as follows:

35 U.S.C. 121 quoted in the preceding section states that the Commissioner may require restriction if two or more “independent and distinct” inventions are claimed in one application. In **37 CFR 1.141**, the statement is made that two or

Art Unit: 2627

more "independent and distinct inventions" may not be claimed in one application.

This raises the question of the subjects as between which the Commissioner may require restriction. This, in turn, depends on the construction of the expression "independent and distinct" inventions.

"Independent," of course, means not dependent. If "distinct" means the same thing, then its use in the statute and in the rule is redundant. If "distinct" means something different, then the question arises as to what the difference in meaning between these two words may be. The hearings before the committees of Congress considering the codification of the patent laws indicate that **35 U.S.C. 121**: "enacts as law existing practice with respect to division, at the same time introducing a number of changes."

The report on the hearings does not mention as a change that is introduced, the subjects between which the Commissioner may properly require division.

The term "independent" as already pointed out, means not dependent. A large number of subjects between which, prior to the **1952 Act**, division had been proper, are dependent subjects, such as, for example, combination and a subcombination thereof; as process and apparatus used in the practice of the process; as composition and the process in which the composition is used; as process and the product made by such process, etc. If section **121** of the **1952 Act** were intended to direct the Commissioner never to approve division between dependent inventions, the word "independent" would clearly have been used alone. If the Commissioner has authority or discretion to restrict independent inventions only, then restriction would be improper as between dependent inventions, e.g., the examples used for purpose of illustration above. Such was clearly not the intent of Congress. Nothing in the language of the statute and nothing in the hearings of the committees indicate any intent to change the substantive law on this subject. On the contrary, joinder of the term "distinct" with the term "independent," indicates lack of such intent. The law has long been established that dependent inventions (frequently termed related inventions) such as used for illustration above may be properly divided if they are, in fact, "distinct" inventions, even though dependent.

Thus, clearly, the restriction is proper if the Examiner shows that the inventions are distinct **or** independent, but not necessarily both independent *and* distinct.

Rejoinder Considerations

As it pertains to the restriction between the distinctly identified Species, *supra*, the following should be noted.

Upon the allowance of a generic claim, Applicant will be entitled to consideration of claims to additional Species which depend from or otherwise require all the limitations of an allowable generic claim as provided by **37 CFR 1.141**. If claims are added after the election, Applicant must indicate which are readable upon the elected species. **MPEP § 809.02(a)**.

In the event of rejoinder, the requirement for restriction between the distinctly grouped Species will be reconsidered, and any rejoined claims will be fully examined for patentability in accordance with **37 CFR 1.104**. Thus, to be allowable, the rejoined claims must meet all criteria for patentability including the requirements of **35 U.S.C. §§ 101, 102, 103 and 112**. Withdrawn Species claims that do not depend from an allowed generic linking claim will not be rejoined. Further, note that the prohibition against double patenting rejections of **35 U.S.C. 121** does not apply where the restriction requirement is withdrawn by the Examiner before the patent issues. See **MPEP § 804.01**.

Joint Inventor(s), if Any

If there is more than one inventor, the following should be noted: Applicant is reminded that upon the cancellation of claims to a non-elected invention, the inventorship must be amended in compliance with **37 CFR 1.48(b)** if one or more of the currently named inventors is no longer an inventor of at least one claim remaining in the application. Any amendment of

inventorship must be accompanied by a request under **37 CFR 1.48(b)** and by the fee required under **37 CFR 1.17(i)**.

Conclusion

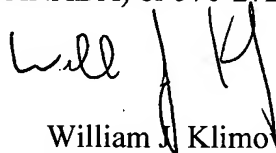
A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE **ONE (1) MONTH OR THIRTY (30) DAYS**, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION. Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of **37 CFR 1.136(a)**. In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after **SIX (6) MONTHS** from the mailing date of this communication. Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (**35 U.S.C. § 133**). Any reply received later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See **37 CFR 1.704(b)**.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to William J. Klimowicz whose telephone number is (571) 272-7577. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Thursday (6:30AM-5:00PM).

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Hoa Thi Nguyen can be reached on (571) 272-7579. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Art Unit: 2627

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.


William J. Klimowicz
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 2627

WJK